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ABSTRACT

This document presents a set of action-oriented mandates developed at a conference of black national and grassroots organizations and associations to discuss ways to improve the education of black children. The mandates cover the following major issue areas: (1) students, who attend school to become intellectually, socially, and economically productive, and who have the right to the best possible education on a free and equitable basis; (2) teachers, who must maintain high standards of effective teaching to ensure that each black child is provided the opportunity to attain the skills needed to achieve excellence in education; (3) administrators, who should systematically direct their authority and influence over the actions of students, staff, faculty, and parents to the development and implementation of educational programs that shall effectuate the maximum academic growth of each black child; (4) parents, who should understand their rights and responsibilities, become involved in the schools, and take responsibility for the education of their children; (5) community groups, which should participate more effectively in educating black children, and ask the "right" questions to improve local schools and school systems; and (6) policymakers, whose ultimate authority to plan and provide for effective educational policies and programs should be directed to the goals of achieving equity and excellence for black children. Activities for implementing the mandates are suggested. Appended are a list of the sponsors of the National Conference on Educating Black Children, a list of the institutional funders, and a list of members of the working committee for this document. (BJV)

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1987

A BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION II

developed by

THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATING BLACK CHILDREN

On September 5-7, 1986, a broad, representative cross-section of Black organizations; other national organizations, associations, and sectors; members of local/grass roots communities; and local and national institutions, met to discuss and respond to five major issue areas which impact on the education of Black children. The Issue areas were: students, teachers, administrators, parents and policymakers. The principal conference mission was to produce out of each issue area an articulate set of action-oriented mandates — THE BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION — which the conference participants would develop and take back to their local communities for introduction and implementation. A sixth issue area, community, has since been added.

It was determined that THE BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION would be do-able, implementable, achievable, and succinct.

Here, then, presented for local community action is THE BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION II.

The National Conference On Educating Black Children, urges communities — their citizens and their organizations — to act on THE BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION, and to report the status of their activity to the National Conference.

"We can . . . successfully . . . teach all children"
— Ron Edmonds

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THE BLUEPRINTS II

I. STUDENTS

Preamble: Emphasizing that students attend school to become intellectually, socially, and economically productive, and that they have the right to the best possible education on a free and equitable basis, we pledge to:

ACTION ITEM	IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES
A. Recognize and advocate education as essential for success in our society.	1. Attend school regularly and on time. 2. Complete school assignments. 3. Exercise self discipline. 4. Develop and exhibit confidence in the ability to succeed. 5. Participate in school activities as a positive learner and contributor.
B. Develop and maintain a positive attitude about learning.	1. Acquire and practice effective study habits. 2. Consider academic success as a peer group goal. 3. Learn to work independently. 4. Learn to think critically. 5. Learn to communicate effectively.
C. Utilize family, peer, and community resources to support educational environment.	1. Ask parents to lobby for school needs, visit school regularly, attend special events. 2. Participate and encourage your peers to become active in education-oriented programs (tutoring, clubs, volunteering, etc.) 3. Encourage parents and community members to share their knowledge and skills with students.
D. Make appropriate choices for using leisure time to enhance academic achievement.	1. Participate in activities that expand talents and skills. 2. Develop appreciation for the cultural heritage of Black people 3. Understand and promote the value of volunteer services.

II. TEACHERS

Preamble: High standards of effective teaching must be a non-negotiable reality in all schools and classrooms in which Black students are in attendance. Teachers must ensure that each Black child is provided the opportunity to attain the skills needed to achieve excellence in education.

ACTION ITEM	IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES
A. Develop and demonstrate effective teaching strategies in all aspects of instruction. *continued*	1. Demonstrate subject matter mastery and a strong general education background. 2. Design an effective classroom management program which minimizes student disruptions and creates an environment in which learning can take place. 3. Interact with all students in the classroom and provide individual guidance and feedback for students based on learning styles and special needs.

ACTION ITEM	IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES
A. Develop and demonstrate effective teaching strategies in all aspects of instruction.	4. Demonstrate knowledge of the racial, cultural, social and ethnic background of the student body in order to more accurately and fairly interpret student behavior, thereby lessening the chances of misdiagnosis, misplacement and miseducation of Black youth. 5. Upgrade teaching skills based on effective teaching strategies which enhance learning, regardless of student population. 6. Encourage the development of inservice workshops which focus on varying aspects of effective teaching. 7. Use test data as diagnostic and prescriptive tools for improving student achievement, but *not* as sole indicators for students' entry, promotion, or detention in academic programs.
B. Develop collaborative relationships with peers, school administrators, parents, and community to form a broadbased network of support for educating the Black child.	1. Establish a school-based educational/community committee at each school. Ensure that a teacher at each of the schools serves as the facilitator of the group. Group composition is teachers, community representatives, parents, and administrators. 2. Establish a parent system for each class in the school. This parent system will assist with coordinating a tutorial program for children with specific needs. 3. Collaborate with administrators in selecting and or designing instructional programs and outlining overall plans for a safe and orderly school environment. 4. Observe and work with experienced teachers skilled in subject matter, particularly as it relates to presentation of lessons, classroom management, and a demonstration of positive interpersonal skills. 5. Develop partnerships involving business, higher education, community based organizations and schools that have demonstrated effectiveness in providing support for Black children to meet high academic objectives. 6. Build on identified successful models of self-discipline and promote these models among faculty, administrators, and parents. In addition, teachers may request and utilize the NEA workshop handbook, *The Least Approach to Discipline*. 7. Implement a teacher exchange program and opportunities for demonstration lessons. 8. Implement Group Dynamics/Human Relations workshops so teachers can learn more about group behavior.
C. Assist in the promotion of positive self-awareness among Black students.	1. Create a classroom environment that is student-centered and enhances student self-concept. Locate and develop self-image building activities. 2. Incorporate into lesson plans the use of positive Black role models to interact with students to enhance students' self-concepts and motivate them toward success. 3. Develop in-service and pre-service programs/workshops to educate teachers regarding building self esteem in Black children. Develop in-service workshops that focus on teaching styles, teacher expectations, and attitudes which contribute to better student learning. In addition, focus on student needs and how to motivate underachieving students. 4. Establish collaborative relationships with local media to guarantee space on a monthly basis or "as needed" for the wider publication of positive individual achievements. 5. Identify major bulletin boards and showcases in the school to display permanent and semi-permanent awards (certificates, news articles, plaques, trophies, letters of commendation, etc.). 6. Build Black History into the total curricular framework of the school system, utilizing models as appropriate. 7. Encourage the development of workshops which emphasize Black History and Culture presented in a fair, truthful, and realistic context. 8. Identify, collect and utilize model curricula that focus on incorporating Black history, culture and life into the school environment.

D. Optimize teacher input and expertise in decisions relating to effective instruction and successful schooling.	1. Actively seek faculty input in decisions relating to curriculum and the instructional program. 2. Emphasize reading in the content areas and critical-thinking skills so that students use reading and critical-thinking vehicles to comprehend all subject matter. 3. Develop in-service workshops or other staff development forums for teachers in critical thinking skills to help teachers develop or improve their existing skills. 4. Participate in the selection of textbooks, materials and equipment to ensure high quality, practical value, and representation of the U.S. as a multicultural society.
E. Urge better articulation between levels of schooling — elementary/secondary, secondary/colleges.	1. Increase articulation and cooperation between elementary-secondary schools and institutions of higher education in terms of strengthening curricula, teacher enhancement, and mutual sharing of information to improve student achievement. 2. Target programs at the high school and college levels to identify talented minority students who are potential teachers, to diagnose their academic strengths and weaknesses, to strengthen their general school performance, to prepare them adequately for and in college, and to improve their performance on college-entry and teacher-entry tests. 3. Incorporate proven effective discipline strategies in higher education curriculum during pre-service training, particularly for Education majors. 4. Promote policy which encourages teachers, during their pre-service training, to enroll in courses in Black History.

III. ADMINISTRATORS

Preamble: Recognizing that the school site administrator exercises authority and influences the actions of students, staff, faculty, and parents, we ask that such authority and influence be systematically directed to the development and implementation of educational programs which shall effectuate the maximum academic growth of each Black child.

ACTION ITEM	IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES
A. Maximize the time principals are visible to pupils and staff. *continued*	1. Defer activities which can be done after pupils leave school. 2. Schedule and make regular classroom visits. 3. Schedule and make regular hall and other site visits. 4. Make non-scheduled visits frequently.

ACTION ITEM	IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES
A. Maximize the time principals are visible to pupils and staff.	5. Delegate and monitor activities which are not priority. 6. Develop and publicize the principal's expectations of pupils, teachers, and staff. 7. Disclose to parents the principal's plans for observation and monitoring. 8. Invite parents to participate in scheduled visitations and arrange for such participation.
B. Require administrators to help teachers upgrade their performance in the school.	1. Help each teacher to be better prepared for classroom duties. 2. Provide each teacher classroom management models. 3. Provide classroom teaching models. 4. Communicate when appropriate regarding all matters relating to pupil performance. 5. Identify and discuss with the teacher officially those strengths and weaknesses that were observed during regularly scheduled observations of teacher performance. 6. Conceive and implement teacher development programs designed to improve performance in areas of identified weakness. 7. Seek legislation that will mandate effective teacher development. 8. Involve each teacher in planning and delivering staff development and evaluation services. 9. Hold staff accountable for *improvement* based on school goals. 10. Develop school goals with the assistance of faculty and parents. 11. Require total staff self-evaluation. 12. Provide for intra-school visitation of faculty identified as effective teachers. 13. Provide resources to each teacher to improve the teachers' knowledge of Black history and culture. 14. Require each teacher to demonstrate working knowledge of Black history and culture.
C. Improve the process for assigning principals to schools with high Black student populations.	1. Analyze current recruitment, selection and assignment practices of the school district. 2. Determine characteristics of those administrators within and without the school district who proved to be effective in schools with high Black student populations. 3. Modify recruitment, selection, and assignment procedures as necessary to assure that candidates attracted, selected and assigned to schools with high Black student populations have those characteristics referred to immediately above. 4. Provide opportunities for effective principals to assist new and or less effective principals at both the work site of the effective principals and the work site of the new and/or less effective principals. 5. Provide the same opportunity as above for effective principals to assist potential *candidates* for the principalship.
D. Make the principal accountable for knowing and providing an instructional program which teaches basic skills and more.	1. Require the principal to specify to teachers, parents, and community those skills needed by the pupils attending the school. 2. Require the principal to specify the method to be used *by the principal* to assure those skills are taught in the school. 3. Require the principal to specify how the teaching of the identified skills will be measured in the school. 4. Require the principal to specify what will be done if, upon measurement, it is determined that the identified skills have not been taught in the school. 5. Require the principal to explain to parents and the community the extent to which recognized effective teaching techniques *are* being used or *are not* being used in the school.
E. Require the principal to develop and implement effective means of involving parents in the school.	1. Arrange both day and evening times when parents are invited to the school. 2. Schedule times when parents may visit without having made a prior appointment. 3. Inform parents of desired techniques of effective involvement. 4. Solicit and seek ways to accommodate methods of involvement desired by parents. 5. Encourage home visits by teachers. 6. Regularly provide parents a schedule of school events. 7. Develop and periodically distribute a parent handbook. 8. Solicit help from churches, community organizations, and businesses to increase parental involvement. 9. Require each teacher to inform parents of objectives relating to individual pupils and the classroom.

IV. PARENTS

Preamble: Assisting Black parents in understanding their rights and responsibilities, developing models for parental involvement in the schools, encouraging parents to take responsibility for the education of their children, we commit as follows to:

ACTION ITEM	IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES
A. Create a home environment which fosters respect for and interest in learning/education.	1. Develop a daily/weekly routine or schedule that allows: a. time for family sharing and nurturing b. time for suitable reading. 2. Provide work space for suitable study. 3. Encourage family members to assist one another in learning. 4. Monitor children's school work. 5. Assign household tasks that develop responsibility and cooperation within the home. 6. Monitor and direct television viewing, including length of time and quality of programs. 7. Perpetuate Black History and Culture through: a. family reunions b. family history book/photograph albums c. stories from older family members d. family activities such as movies, concerts, field trips, outings, etc. 8. Understand and appreciate the aesthetic value of a variety of music. a. Become familiar with music heard on the radio. Allow children opportunities to share their thoughts on what the words in songs mean. Have children sing their favorite tunes and develop songs or lyrics on their own.
B. Assist other Black parents in understanding their rights and responsibilities; develop models for parental involvement.	1. Urge the school administration to sponsor image building training activities designed to abate institutional distrust and fear on the part of parents. 2. Urge parents to share information on rights, responsibilities, and other activities, issues of concern to parents. 3. Sponsor events to inform parents of policies and practices. Develop a format which clearly advises parents of their rights and responsibilities. a. Role playing conferences b. Clearly understandable written materials 4. Organize "telephone trees" which will foster one-on-one dialogue between parent leaders and other parents.
C. Increase school and classroom visitations.	1. Urge appropriate community and parent leaders to provide opportunities for parents to learn how to make effective school visits. Be prepared to consider the following: a. teacher behavior, attitudes, expectations b. classroom management and skills c. textbook and classroom materials d. class size e. school appearance (physical facilities; cleanliness) f. curriculum.

D. Concentrate on building community resources and support.	1. Identify all agencies, business organizations, civic and political leaders, churches which serve the residents of the local school jurisdiction (neighborhood). 2. Identify priorities and commitment to schools through meetings and community forums. 3. Participate in the school organization/system by various means: a. attend board meetings b. seek active participation in principal selection c. seek active participation in textbook selection d. seek active participation in curriculum choices e. seek active participation in acquisition of funds f. complete a curriculum audit g. review teacher education programs and teacher certification standards.
E. Develop interaction with teachers to improve the achievement of students.	1. Initiate working relationships with teachers and school administrators via school visits, telephone conversations, and written communications. 2. Promptly respond to any notices from the teacher or the school.
F. Lobby to get rural school districts to provide transportation and other services needed for effective parental involvement.	1. Request transportation to the school for conferences, meetings, or programs. 2. Encourage the use of alternative and rotating sites for school meetings. 3. Request that churches offer facilities to parents after services on Sundays, and on other days.
G. Promote awareness of the severity and intensity of problems related to teen pregnancy, birth, and parenting.	1. Promote a home climate that is open and receptive for discussions regarding sexuality. 2. Discuss with teenagers problems of teen pregnancy; select and discuss appropriate television programs. 3. Monitor the television viewing habits of children and youth; avoid inappropriate exposure. 4. Establish and participate in community, church, or school groups focused on sex education and parenting. a. Visit local Planned Parenthood sites. b. Write or call the Children's Defense Fund, the National Black Child Development Institute, and other such organizations, for information. Children's Defense Fund 122 C Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001 (202) 628-8787 National Black Child Development Institute 1463 Rhode Island Ave., N.W. Washington, D.C. 20005 (202) 387-1281 c. Create mentor programs with positive role models in the community. d. Create academic skill support programs for students. e. Develop parent support groups that address the problems.
H. Recognize and understand the severity of drugs, alcohol, and other substance use and abuse. *continued*	1. Gather and disseminate information about the types of drugs, alcohol, and other substances currently used in different regions of the country. 2. Learn to recognize symptoms and effects of drugs, alcohol, and other substances.

ACTION ITEM	IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES
H. Recognize and understand the severity of drugs, alcohol, and other substance use and abuse.	3. Provide strong family support to help children/youth develop personal values and self-confidence by demonstrating appropriate behavior. 4. Promote a home climate that is open and receptive to discussions regarding drug, alcohol, and other substance use and abuse.
I. Develop strategies which will help children/youth to resist the use of drugs, alcohol, and other such substances that are harmful or potentially harmful.	1. Be a model; demonstrate appropriate behavior. 2. Reemphasize values as indicated in #3 immediately above. 3. Promote a home climate as indicated in #4 above. 4. Develop present support groups that address the problems.

V. COMMUNITY

Preamble: Understanding the need to organize and activate community groups to participate more effectively in educating Black children, including the need to ask the "right questions" to improve local schools and school systems, we commit as follows to:

ACTION ITEM	IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES
A. Maximize the time community groups interact with the system (local schools, districts, areas, regions, etc.).	1. Develop a clear set of minimum expectations as they relate to students' academic achievement and behavior. 2. Identify the key actors in the policy and decision making process (school board members, principals, regional superintendents, etc.). Target your energies toward the most appropriate level. 3. Learn the official chain of command and the appropriateness of its use. 4. Be prepared to move to the next level of decision making. 5. In the beginning, pick targets that are likely to present quick success. 6. Expect success. 7. Identify other community groups which may share your ideas.
B. Monitor students' outcomes.	1. Obtain the hard data (reading scores, mathematics scores, attendance figures, dropout rates, number of pupils progressing to the next educational level, etc.) from the various Board of Education offices. 2. Consider items that relate to school culture that may be more subjective.

C. Understand the philosophy of the school district.	To understand the school district's philosophy, consider the following: 1. Principle of purpose — to what extent does the district a. articulate a set of purposes that provides long-term direction? b. value the importance of employees understanding the purposes of the district's mission? c. value the importance of decisions being made with consideration of the purpose? 2. Principle of Empowerment — to what extent does the district a. value empowering employees throughout the district to assist in the district's mission? b. value equal opportunity to access, information, support, and resources? c. view power as an expanding entity throughout the organization? 3. Principle of Decision Making — to what extent does the district a. support the decentralization of decisions as close to the local school as possible? b. value opportunity for input in districtwide decisions? c. value decisions being made by those who are directly affected by them? 4. Principle of Belonging — to what extent does the district a. value commitment to the development of the individual within the district? b. treat individual employees as significant stakeholders in the organization? c. value a "we spirit" and feeling of ownership in the organization? 5. Principle of Trust and Confidence — to what extent does the district a. believe that employees act in the best interests of students and the organization? b. have confidence in the expertise of staff members to make wise decisions? c. believe that employees will respond with their best efforts when appropriately recognized? 6. Principle of Excellence — to what extent does the district a. value high standards and high expectations? b. value an atmosphere encouraging all staff members to "stretch and grow?" c. believe in investing in the potential of district employees? 7. Principle of Recognition and Reward - to what extent does the district a. value offering incentives to encourage innovation and risk-taking? b. believe in recognizing employees and students who achieve significant accomplishments? c. believe in investing in the potential of district employees? 8. Principle of Caring — to what extent does the district a. value the well-being and personal concerns of the employees? b. believe in employees sharing themselves in an open and trusting manner? c. take a personal interest in the professional development and career of employees? 9. Principle of Integrity — to what extent does the district a. value differences in individual philosophy and personality? b. value and encourage differences in teaching style and philosophy? c. believe that schools are inevitably different, calling for flexibility in teaching and learning approaches?

VI. POLICYMAKERS

Preamble: Recognizing that policymakers have the ultimate authority to plan and provide for effective educational policies and programs, we ask that this weighty influence be directed to the goals of achieving educational equity and excellence for Black children.

ACTION ITEM	IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES
A. Eliminate and replace those policies and practices that are institutionalized but obsolete. *continued*	1. Systematically review and analyze all existing school district policies and practices.

ACTION ITEM	IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES
A. Eliminate and replace those policies and practices that are institutionalized but obsolete.	a. Identify, prioritize, isolate and eliminate those policies and practices most detrimental to the effective education of Black children. b. Adopt a program of corrective actions consistent with the priorities. 2. Adopt policies which require teachers of Black students to demonstrate knowledge about the history, culture, and language of Black people. 3. Require teachers of Black students to have successful preservice or supervised in-service experience with Blacks. 4. Advocate that the National Standards Board for Teacher Selection incorporate in its criteria recognition of the special needs of Black students, teachers, and principals. 5. Adopt and implement a clear affirmative action hiring and promotional policy for Black people in the educational system. 6. Adopt a policy which requires that some faculty and staff represent the racial. ethnic makeup of the student body. 7. Adopt a policy which requires that all screening and hiring committees include Black members. 8. Become thoroughly familiar with the "Oversight on School Discipline" hearing, held before the Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education, House Committee on Education and Labor, held on January 23/24, 1984.
B. Establish a comprehensive equity policy.	1. Develop and present models which focus upon effective education for Black students. a. Declaration of the Year of the Black Child models. b. Adopt and implement the Ron Edmonds Effective Schools program and related proven school improvement programs. 2. Develop and present action models for closing the achievement gap between Black students and the highest achieving group(s). 3. Develop and present action models to ensure fair placement and equitable services for Black children in Special Education programs for the Gifted and Talented, as well as physically or mentally handicapped. 4. Develop and present action models to reduce the overrepresentation of Black students referred for discipline, exclusion, suspension, or expulsion. 5. Develop and present action models to reduce the number of Black students who drop out. 6. Develop and present local, state, and federal policies that assure funding which addresses the needs of Black students as outlined in this Blueprint. 7. Advocate the reauthorization of Chapter I in a manner which assures maximum benefit to Black students. a. Educate legislators to reinstate mandatory and meaningful parental involvement. b. Develop form letters to representatives calling for the reinstatement of guidelines for parental involvement. c. Educate constituency and others to assure that reauthorization allocates full funding and is based on an equitable formula. d. Educate constituency and others to assure that reauthorization includes full funding for academic and social programs needed by children "at risk." 8. Address issues of attracting, recruiting, and retaining Black teachers. 9. Provide scholarships and loans at the federal, state, and local levels with funds targeted for Black families.

C. Adopt policies and practices that facilitate school personnel interaction with community and social services agencies.	1. Encourage interaction with those organizations focusing on the preservation and stabilization of Black families. 2. Establish programs and procedures for utilizing the resources of civic, social and religious organizations within the Black community. 3. Encourage local groups and lodges to come and talk about the need for involvement. Contact groups such as the Girl Friends, Links, Jack and Jill, etc. 4. Be informed on what external groups can do. Outline suggested action recommendations. 5. Call on leadership groups such as the NAACP, the National Urban League, etc. to rally other groups to work with school board members; have them set clear goals — long range (5 to 10 years), e.g.: a. within 10 years, Black children in each grade in the district will score, as a group, at or above average national norms on standardized tests. b. within 5 years, the percentage of black and white enrollment in college preparatory programs will be approximately the same.
D. Assure that recognition and appropriate incentives are directly related to the success of Black students.	1. Mandate school-wide evaluation policy based on the improvement of Black student achievement. 2. Evaluate and reward schools based on the performance of Black students in at least the following areas: a. improved academic achievement, b. improved attendance, c. decreased suspensions, d. decreased dropout rate, e. increased college eligible rate. 3. Provide school incentives to encourage superior teachers to remain in the classroom.
E. Encourage school-business partnerships.	1. Promote adopt-a-school arrangements targeting Black businesses and Black business people. 2. Promote talent mentoring partnerships.
F. Develop and present instructional policy models that meet the needs of Black students.	1. Match teaching styles with student learning styles for improved instructional outcomes. 2. Assign teaching staff based upon the needs of Black students and related school programs. 3. Assure gender fair instruction, focusing on equity of Black males and Black females.
G. Promote high standards of academic excellence and cultural awareness.	1. Focus on basic skills, followed by higher cognitive and effective skill development. 2. Focus upon the positiveness of the Black experience.

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"A mind is a terrible thing to waste."
—United Negro College Fund

"A child miseducated is a child lost."
—John F. Kennedy

"You can only write so many national reports and pass so many acts by the legislature. Eventually you have to go back and ask what is happening in individual schools."
—Ernest Boyer,
President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

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